

SPRING 2011

SHOULDER-TO-SHOULDER

The quarterly newsletter of Road Trauma Support Services Victoria Inc.

The Human Face of Road Trauma



Road trauma is not about statistics, it's about people; real people who suffer real grief, real loss and very real injuries. It is this human face of road trauma that RTSSV presents to people through its Road Trauma Awareness Seminars (RTAS).

The seminars, which are predominantly attended by people sentenced through the Magistrates' Court, are not about educating people on how to drive, they are about humanising the statistics and having participants understand that their driving behaviours have real human consequences. Volunteers who have been affected by road trauma give first-hand accounts of their experiences, leaving participants under no illusions that their actions on the road have very real consequences for themselves and others.

In 2010/2011 1260 people participated in RTSSV's RTAS program. More than 85% of these participants were male and more than 70% were aged between 15 and 25.

It's a staggering statistic but hardly surprising when you realise that 18 to 25 year-olds represent only 13% of licensed drivers, yet they account for more than 25% of all drivers killed on Victoria's roads¹ and 36% of all drink drivers killed in road crashes².

RTAS participant Nick Rush was very nearly one of these statistics. By 2006 and at only 24 years-old, his licence had been suspended three times for serious traffic offences; driving 90kph in a 50kph zone; colliding with another car and a tree after doing a burnout with a blood alcohol reading of 0.11; and doing 100kph in a 50kph zone with a blood alcohol reading of 0.18.

Nick believed he was invincible.

"I was careless. I was arrogant and I was over-confident. I had already been to four friends' funerals who died in road accidents and that still didn't stop me reoffending."



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I have had my licence suspended for a total of six years and two months, had a six month suspended jail term, did six months community service and paid a \$1,000 fine" Nick said.

But after his final licence suspension in 2006 Nick realised something had to give. "My attitude was appalling, my family was being affected and I knew I was going to become a statistic if I didn't get help." Nick enrolled himself in RTSSV's Road Trauma Awareness Seminar and has never looked back.

"The course completely changed my attitude – finally something hit a nerve with me and it turned my life around. It was so harrowing to hear a mother talk about watching her daughter get run over and a woman who saw her sister get hit by a bus - I challenge anyone to walk out of a room and not be affected by that.

"I realised then and there that I was going to be the next person to become a statistic, or worse, kill someone else with my driving. If I did not change my behaviour, it would be my mother or father speaking to a group of offenders."

The Human Face of Road Trauma (contd)

It is these hard hitting personal stories that RTSSV's Education Manager Chris Harrison believes are what make the program so successful.

“For a participant to have to sit and look someone in the eye who has lost a loved one or has suffered permanent injuries through road trauma is extremely confronting .

There's no getting away from it, it's in their face and they are forced to own and take responsibility for their own driving behaviour.” Chris said.

Nick is one of the lucky ones, he managed to escape without harming himself or anyone else, but he knows it was luck that kept him safe and he wants others to realise that if your luck runs out the consequences are catastrophic.

“I just want to tell young drivers to think and slow down; consider what it would be like for a loved one to have to identify your body at the morgue or see you sentenced to jail for killing someone. How would they feel if they killed their best mate or partner?”

Nick is due to get his licence back in November 2011 and says he will never drive dangerously again and is committed to spreading the message about safe driving, especially among his peers.

Ultimately Nick hopes he can turn his experiences into something positive and make a contribution to saving people's lives by stopping them making the same mistakes he did. His message he says is quite simple

“Slow down, you've got too much to lose!”

If you would like more information about becoming a volunteer speaker or about enrolling in an RTAS program contact our office of 03 8877 6900.

Researching RTAS

Substantiating the effectiveness of RTSSV's Road Trauma Awareness Seminar (RTAS) is the focus of a newly established research committee, consisting of RTSSV, Vic Roads, Victoria Police, Monash University Accident Research Centre (MUARC), Australian Road Research Board (ARRB) and Deakin University.

The project, which has a number of stages, is expected to be completed in early 2013. It seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of the RTAS program from a user perspective, ensuring it delivers behavioural change and reduces recidivism to court ordered driving offenders.

“There is strong anecdotal evidence that RTAS is effective in saving lives by changing attitudes and behaviours.” Said RTSSV CEO Paul Ashton. “But in order to expand this program further we need empirical data that supports the anecdotal evidence.”

The main objectives of the program are to:

- Assess the program against best practice
- Measure changes in participant attitudes before and after taking part in an RTAS program
- Obtain qualitative feedback on program components that participants feel have been effective in producing change.
- Measure change in self-reported behaviours before and after participation
- Measure change in crash involvement before and after participation
- Measure change in offence rates before and after participation

RTSSV is currently seeking funding from corporate and philanthropic organisations and individuals to undertake this research. For more information please contact Paul Ashton on 03 8877 6900 or e-mail paul.ashton@rtssv.org.au

RTSSV receives \$50,000 grant



In September RTSSV was thrilled to learn it was successful in securing a \$50,000 grant from The Ian Potter Foundation to develop and implement a peer support program.

The program, which will be rolled-out over a two-year period, is designed to give victims of road trauma an additional and alternative form of support from people who have experienced road trauma.

The program will see RTSSV train volunteers, who have been personally affected by road trauma, to provide individual support to recent road trauma victims and their families. The peer support program will be made available to victims and families in the community as well as to people while they are still in hospital.

For RTSSV, peer support is a specific and unique service, and is an important enrichment to a range of client service options currently offered.

RTSSV peer support has not previously been targeted through external environments such as hospital emergency, trauma and rehabilitation units which constitute a focal point for road trauma affected patients and families.

RTSSV will work alongside a number of key hospitals to establish protocols for this service.

RTSSV CEO, Paul Ashton believes the model is innovative and provides significant benefits for victims.

“The great thing about introducing out-reach into hospitals and rehabilitation centres is that it increases the chances that we are reaching the people who need our support, offering a unique opportunity for victims to speak with someone who has been through a similar experience.” Mr Ashton said.

This project will assist and support some of the families of nearly 300 people who are killed on Victoria’s roads every year, and a further 6,000 who experience severe injury as a result of road trauma.

“The benefit of peer support is that it offers victims an alternative form of support to counselling including the opportunity to talk with someone who ‘knows’, someone who has themselves been through a similar experience, and someone who can be both empathetic and guiding at the same time. This can be particularly beneficial given that traumatic experiences are often isolating, alienating and unnerving because of the unfamiliarity of the experience.

Added Mr Ashton.

“We have also found that peer support has the added benefit of being positive for our volunteers. Volunteers have reported that they feel good about helping others through a difficult time, as well as the experience helping them through their own recovery.”

It is planned that the peer support program will be available to victims for as long as they need the service.

If you are interested in participating in the program as a volunteer or would like further information please contact RTSSV on 03 8877 6900 or e-mail info@rtssv.org.au

Alpine Challenge 2012



The Alpine Challenge is on again in 2012! Taking in some of Victoria's best high country, with over 7,000 meters of ascent and descent, this run is the classic 100 mile (160km) mountain challenge and will test participants to the limit as it traverses some of the hardest and most exposed areas of the Australian Alps.



RTSSV is fortunate to again be the recipient of the proceeds from this event. In 2011 RTSSV received an amazing \$33,000.

If 100 miles seems a bit daunting runners and walkers can do the short course (100km) option or the 60km Alpine Experience over two days.

The event can be run individually, in teams of two or four or in a relay with colleagues or friends. If the run sounds too much like hard work, why not support somebody who is running or become a volunteer.

We are looking for volunteers to help over the weekend of 17-19 March 2012. In particular volunteers are needed as timekeepers, photographers, marshals, drivers and gofers.

The event will not only change your life, but funds raised will assist RTSSV help those struggling with the impact of road trauma.

To volunteer, enter or for more information about the Alpine Challenge contact Paul Ashton on 0418 136 070 or or visit www.rtssv.org.au



Time for Remembering

An open invitation is extended to the public to attend Road Trauma Support Services' Time for Remembering. This year marks the 11th year of the statewide multi-faith service, which gives attendees the opportunity to commemorate the lives of loved ones lost on our roads, celebrate their lives and give thanks for those who survived. It is also an opportunity to pay tribute to those agencies and individuals who work tirelessly to reduce the road toll and the associated trauma and grief.

Event details:

Date: Sunday, 20 November 2011

Time: 12pm

Venue: Queen's Hall, Parliament House, Melbourne (Melways reference 2F, K2)

To RSVP or for further information please contact Road Trauma Support Services on 8877 6900

Newsy Bits

The Board has finalised the organisation's strategic direction for 2011 – 2013. The future direction is focussed on consolidating our work and engaging more strongly with the corporate and philanthropic communities. A copy of the strategy can be downloaded from our website www.rtssv.org.au

Our trial program with RACV, to ascertain best practice for RTSSV to provide better statewide coverage of face-to-face counselling, has been expanded to Morwell and Bendigo, increasing our reach of face-to-face counselling in regional Victoria. For more information on these services contact our counselling service on 1300 367 797.

Since our last newsletter there have been a few staff changes at RTSSV with our Counselling Manager John Downes and Volunteer Manager Maria Thompson, leaving us. We would like to acknowledge their contribution to RTSSV and wish them all the best in their future endeavours.



A huge thanks is extended to the Honda Foundation, which has given us a three year loan of a brand new Honda Insight.

Our CEO Paul Ashton accepted the car from the Honda's Ringwood Dealership General Manager John Tofari in September.

The car is a hybrid and is packed full of awesome features, but most importantly it comprises excellent safety features including front passenger and driver front, side and curtain airbags and comes with a five star ANCAP rating.

THANK YOU HONDA!

RTSSV in the Community

The connection between RTSSV and emergency services such as Ambulance Victoria, SES, CFA and Victoria Police is critical. Paramedics are on the frontline of dealing with road crash victims and so it is important they know our services are available for victims. We were therefore thrilled to be invited to speak to paramedic students at Victoria University of Technology.

RTSSV's Patron Bev Brock, Ambassador Jeanette Suhr and volunteer Karen Robinson were the guest speakers to the next generation of paramedics. The presentation to the 200 first, second and third year paramedic students included a personal account by Karen Robinson of losing her son in a car crash while Bev and Jeanette talked about the important role of RTSSV in supporting people who have been impacted by road trauma.

The students were so moved by the presentation that many made donations to RTSSV and also volunteered their medical services for the Alpine Challenge.



How you can help

At Road Trauma Support Services we find that there are so many services that we would like to deliver but unfortunately there just aren't the funds to go around.

We are currently looking to develop services in a number of areas and need community / business support to help us achieve our goals. If you would like to make a donation or sponsor a project please fill out the coupon below or contact Paul Ashton on 8877 6911.

Some of the projects that your support can make a difference to include:

\$230 will pay for an additional day of telephone counselling.

\$250 will assist us to run a group information session in Melbourne or Regional Victoria for people affected by Road Trauma and loss. Total funds required – Melbourne \$9,000, Regional Victoria \$16,000.

\$350 will pay for an additional day of face-to-face counselling at one of our off-site locations in Bendigo, Morwell, Niddrie and Geelong. Total funds required per location, \$16,500pa

\$1,500 will contribute towards an evaluation of our Road Trauma Awareness Seminars, designed to affect change in behaviour of court ordered offenders. Total funds required \$15,000.

I would like to support Road Trauma Support Services Victoria.

Name: _____

Home phone: _____ Mobile: _____ Email: _____

My donation is \$500 \$250 \$100 \$50 Other \$ _____
(donations of \$2.00 or more are tax deductible and a receipt will be provided)

Method of Payment: Cheque / MasterCard / Visa / AMEX

Card Number: _____ CCV _____ Expiry: ____/____

Name on Card: _____

Address: _____

Signature: _____ Date: ____/____/____

If you would like further information regarding our work please indicate below:

- Please send me information on your bequest program
- Please send me information on volunteering
- I would like to make a major gift, please contact me

To donate please complete the form with your cheque or credit card details and mail or fax to:
Road Trauma Support Services Victoria PO Box 1283, Blackburn Vic 3130
OR Fax: (03) 9877 9799 Telephone: (03) 8877 6900

Privacy Statement

The personal information we collect on this form will be used to track and manage donations and for marketing purposes. This information may be disclosed to other members of the organisation or third parties who do things on our behalf where it is required or allowed by law or where you have otherwise consented. You can access the personal information we have collected, if we have retained it, by calling the organisation.

Thank you for generously supporting our work

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